Nothing in linguistics makes sense except in the light of change

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Nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution (Theodosius Dobzhansky 1973)

1. Primary Linguistic Data (Universal Grammar → Grammar)
   Binding theory and learning
   2. a. They washed themselves.
   b. Kim’s father loves her.
   c. Kim heard [Bill’s speeches about her].
   d. Kim left.
   e. *Kim said that Kim left

Punctuated Equilibrium in study of diachronic syntax
Development of formal approaches to syntax
Cue-based discovery model of acquisition (Dresher 1999, Fodor 1998, Lightfoot 1999)

First Novelty: New Inflectional items
3. a. She has seen stars
   b. *She has could see stars
4. a. Seeing stars, ...
   b. *Canning see stars, ...
5. a. She wanted to see stars
   b. *She wanted to can see stars
6. a. She will try to see stars
   b. *She will can see stars
7. a. She understands music
   b. *She can music
8. I fear that the emperor will depart thence, before my letters shall may come unto your grace’s hands (1532, Cranmer, Letters)
9. That appered at the fyrste to mow stande the realm in grete stede (1533, More, Works 885 C1), ‘appeared at first to be able to stand the realm in good stead.’
10. If wee had ought convenient come together, ye would rather have choses to have harde my minde of mine owne mouthe (1528, More, Works 107 H6), ‘if we had been able to come together conveniently, …’

11. IP
    Spec
    IP
    I
    VP
    V
    VP
    can
    see stars

12. IP
    Spec
    IP
    I
    VP
    V
    VP
    can
    see stars

13. present tense: fremme, fremst, fremhp, fremnap. sēo, siehst, siehþ, sēþþp. rīde, rītst, rīt, rīðap
    past tense: fremedest, fremedest, fremened. rād, rīde, rād and ridon
14. They might/must/could/should/would leave tomorrow.
Former preterite-present verbs became non-verb-like [no 3rd sg -s ending, -d forms with non-past, "subjunctive" meanings]

Second Novelty: Loss of \( \mathcal{V} \)
15. a. *Sees Kim stars?
   b. Does Kim see stars?
16. a. *Kim sees not stars
   b. Kim does not see stars
17. a. *Kim sees always stars
   b. Kim always sees stars
18. IP
   Spec IP
   I VP
   V N
   see stars
19. a. Where didst thou see her? - O unhappy girl! - With the Moor, say'st thou?
   b. I like not that. // What dost thou say?
   c. Alas, what does this gentleman conceive? - How do you, madam?

Third Novelty: Atomic forms of \( \text{be} \)
20. a. Kim slept well, and Jim will [sc. sleep well] too.
   b. Kim seems well behaved today, and she often has [sc. seemed well behaved] in the past, too.
   c. Although Kim went to the store, Jim didn’t [sc. go to the store].
   d. slept: [past+sleep]
21. a. Kim will be here, and Jim will [sc be here] too.
   b. Kim has been here, and Jim has [sc. been here] too
   c. *Kim was here and Jim will [sc. be here] too.
   d. *If Kim is well behaved today, then Jim probably will [sc. be well behaved] too.
   e. *Kim was here yesterday and Jim has [sc. been here] today.
22. a. I wish our opinions were the same. But in time they will [sc. be the same].
   d. I think, added he, all the Charges attending it, and the Trouble you had, were defray'd by my Attorney; I ordered that they should [sc. be defrayed]. 1741, Samuel Richardson, Pamela (London, 3rd edn.), vol.2, 129.
   e. were: [subjunctive+be]
23. a. Kim was to go to Paris.
   b. *Kim will be to go to Paris.
24. a. Kim has been to Paris.
   b. *Kim was to Paris.
25. a. I regretted Kim reading that chapter.
   b. I regretted that Kim was reading that chapter.
   c. *I regretted Kim being reading that chapter.
   b. I was this morning to buy silk. 1762, Oliver Goldsmith, Cit W! 158 (meaning 'I went to ...; not I had to ...').
   c. One day being discoursing with her upon the extremities they suffered ... 1791, Daniel Defoe, Robinson Crusoe, vol. 2, 218.
27. a. You are being naughty. You are being a bore
   b. Everything is being done. Susan is being arrested.

Cue-based, discovery model
Primary Linguistic Data, (Universal Grammar \( \to \) I-language\( \Rightarrow \))
Consequences
Gradual change in E-language and punctuated equilibrium in I-languages
No notions yet of natural changes or conservative parameter settings (cf reconstruction of phonology)
Causes of new I-language are local and contingent (domino effects)
Discontinuities create difficulties for reconstruction of prehistorical proto-languages

References


